

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 01986

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PEBR, CA  
SUBJECT: NEW QUEBEC LIBERAL LEADER CLAUDE RYAN: SOME  
QUESTIONS

REF: QUEBEC 125

1. DESPITE HEAVY MEDIA ATTENTION BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER  
CLAUDE RYAN'S SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP RUN AND EXCELLENT  
MONTREAL AND QUEBEC CITY CG COVERAGE, RYAN REMAINS RATHER  
ENIGMATIC FIGURE TO US AND, WE SUSPECT, TO MOST CANADIANS  
OUTSIDE QUEBEC.

2. FOR EXAMPLE, RYAN WAS WIDELY CRITICIZED EARLY ON FOR  
LACK OF SOLID POLITICAL CREDENTIALS. MANY SEASONED  
POLITICIANS HERE WERE DUBIOUS AS TO WHETHER A CEREBRAL  
JOURNALIST COULD SURVIVE, LET ALONE THRIVE IN THEIR ROUGH  
GAME. WE UNDERSTAND THAT TRUDEAU, IN HIS DEVASTATING  
MANNER, ONCE SAID RE RYAN, "LACK OF POWER CORRUPTS, ABSO-  
LUTE LACK OF POWER CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY."

3. FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT, IT APPEARS THAT RYAN, THE  
NEOPHYTE, HAS DONE EXTRAORDINARILY WELL, SO FAR AT LEAST.  
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OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT HIS CAMPAIGN WAS ABSOLUTELY FIRST-  
RATE--HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL AND SKILLFUL IN UTILIZING NEW-  
COMER TALENT TO OUTGUN THE POLITICALLY EXPERIENCED GARNEAU  
MACHINE. BEST TESTIMONY TO THIS IS THE RESULTS OF THE  
LEADERSHIP RACE. TO BE SURE, RYAN ORGANIZERS MAY HAVE HAD  
THE BETTER MAN IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT THE OVERWHELMING  
VICTORY SHOWED UNMISTAKEABLE PRINT OF SMOOTH ORGANIZATION.

4. WE WONDER TO WHAT EXTENT SUCCESS OF RYAN CAMPAIGN WAS ATTRIBUTABLE TO RYAN ORGANIZERS AND TO WHAT EXTENT IT REFLECTS RYAN'S PREVIOUSLY UNTAPPED POLITICAL SKILLS. IN THIS REGARD, THE NAME TRUDEAU COMES TO MIND. GRASS GREEN IN 1968, HE HAS OUTLIVED POLITICALLY MOST BACKROOM OPERATORS OF THAT ERA IN NO SMALL MEASURE BECAUSE OF HIS REMARKABLE POLITICAL TALENT.

5. THIS QUESTION COULD BE IMPORTANT. WHETHER OR NOT HE SEEKS A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEAT SOON (REFTEL), RYAN EVENTUALLY MUST GO UP AGAINST ONE OF THE VERY BEST IN PREMIER RENE LEVESQUE. SMOOTH ORGANIZERS BEHIND HIM WILL HELP BUT MAY NOT BE ENOUGH. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, RYAN'S OWN POLITICAL SKILLS MAY BE WHAT COUNT.

6. SECOND ENIGMA RELATES TO RYAN'S POTENTIAL IMPACT IN COMING NATIONAL ELECTIONS. FEDERAL TORIES HAVE ALREADY PROCLAIMED THAT RYAN ELECTION WILL WORK TO THEIR ADVANTAGE BY PLACING TRUDEAU AS THIRD MAN IN NATIONAL UNITY QUESTION BEHIND LEVESQUE AND RYAN. RYAN'S DECIDEDLY LESS CENTRALIST VIEWS, THEY CLAIM, MAY ALSO CAST DOUBT ON TRUDEAU'S LONG-STANDING CENTRALIST CONVICTIONS.

7. LIBERALS, ON OTHER HAND, CONFIDENTLY PREDICT THAT RYAN ELECTION SHOULD HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE IN CAMPAIGN. CONFIDENTIAL

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THEY ACCENTUATE FEDERALIST PHILOSOPHY OF BOTH WHILE SKIPPING OVER DIFFERENCES ON MEANS TO THAT END. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT (AND NOT MENTIONED PUBLICLY) IS LIBERAL CONFIDENCE THAT RYAN WILL NOT ROCK BOAT DURING COMING TWO MONTH CAMPAIGN. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT IS NEARLY IRRELEVANT TO POLITICAL STRATEGISTS.

8. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT IS, OF COURSE, PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT UNKNOWN IN RYAN'S MAKE-UP. HE HAS ALREADY SERVED NOTICE THAT, WHILE HE SEEKS COOPERATIVE APPROACH WITH ANGLOPHONE PROVINCES AND OTTAWA, HE FULLY INTENDS TO PUSH HIS "AUTONOMIST" VIEWS ON QUEBEC'S PLACE IN CONFEDERATION. WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE DOWN-PLAYED SOME OF THESE DURING LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN, NO DOUBT TO HIS IMMEDIATE POLITICAL ADVANTAGE. IF AND WHEN HE OPENS UP, HOWEVER, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE BILATERAL BATTLE (TRUDEAU/LEVESQUE) WILL BECOME A TRIANGLE (TRUDEAU/LEVESQUE/RYAN) WITH CONSEQUENCES THAT ARE PRESENTLY HARD TO PREDICT.

9. THE FOREGOING SUGGESTS THAT UNFOLDING OF "THE REAL CLAUDE RYAN" OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS AND YEARS WILL

BE WELL WORTH TRACKING CAREFULLY. CERTAINLY, WE NOW HAVE  
ANOTHER COMPLEX FIGURE TO ADD TO THE FASCINATION OF  
TRUDEAU AND LEVESQUE. HOW HE WORKS INTO THEIR ACT COULD  
BE DETERMINATIVE IN THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY. ENDERS

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